

NATIONAL JAPANESE AMERICAN MEMORIAL

Louisiana and New Jersey Avenues and D Street, NW,
Washington, D.C.

Report to the National Park Service

August 5, 1999

Abstract

The National Park Service (NPS) has submitted preliminary and final site and building plans for the National Japanese American Memorial. The design development drawings successfully addressed requests made by the Commission at the approval of concept design on October 9, 1997.

The design of the memorial provides an appropriate form for conveying the memorial's story and message. The design elements work together to create a straightforward and compelling whole, including the suggestion of the sense of containment and the symbolic reference to the islands of Japan. The bell will provide a memorable component of the memorial experience that draws on Japanese temple traditions.

Authority

Public Laws 99-652 and 102-502 and the Commemorative Works Act 40 (U.S.C. 1007).

Commission Action

The Commission:

- **Approves** the preliminary and final site and building plans for the National Japanese American Memorial at Louisiana and New Jersey Avenues and D Street, NW, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 1.11(3800) – 40672.
- **Requests** that the NPS and its design team submit an exterior lighting plan of all proposed site lighting, including any lighting of the wall, pool, sculpture, and other special features of the memorial.

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BACKGROUND AND STAFF EVALUATION

- The National Park Service (NPS), in conjunction with the National Japanese American Memorial Foundation, has submitted preliminary site and building plans for the National Japanese American Memorial to be located in the triangular parcel bounded by Louisiana and New Jersey Avenues and D Street, NW.

The purpose of the memorial, as stated in P.L. 102-502, is "to honor Japanese American patriotism in World War II." This includes Japanese Americans who served in the military and Japanese Americans who were relocated to internment camps.

- Public Law (P.L.) 102-502 authorizes the memorial and specifies that it be developed in accordance with P.L. 96-652, the Commemorative Works Act of 1986.
- P.L. 104-333 transferred the site from Architect of the Capitol to NPS jurisdiction in 1996.

Location:

- The site is located on Louisiana Avenue between Union Station and the Mall.
- The landscaped open space of the U.S. Capitol grounds is across Louisiana Avenue.
- A slightly smaller open triangular parcel lies one block southwest.
- Immediately adjacent to the site are a private office building (southwest) and its parking structure, the Hyatt Regency Hotel (northwest), and the Holiday Inn and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters office building (north).

Site:

- The site area is 33,000 square feet (.76 acres) between curbs.
- The site is currently an open grassy area with many trees.
- The site slopes away from Louisiana Avenue with a drop of 7 feet along New Jersey Avenue and 14 feet along D Street.
- There is curbside parking on all adjoining streets that is reserved for those with permits from the Architect of the Capitol.

Design:

- The proposed design includes curved granite walls that define pathways and frame a central circular plaza.
 - Two granite paths curve inward to the plaza from Louisiana Avenue: one rises slightly from the corner of New Jersey Avenue to the plaza and the other rises three feet from the plaza to the D Street corner. The "Carnelian" granite is a warm gray with pink tones. It will have a thermal (textured) finish and the pavers will be installed in a pattern that provides emphasize to the plaza.
 - The path from the New Jersey Avenue corner is defined by low walls that rise from six inches to three feet and act as retaining walls for the berm that rings the central plaza.

- A taller, 7'-3" high, wall surrounds most of the central plaza. This higher wall continues along the path with the rising grade reducing its height to approximately four feet at the Louisiana Avenue sidewalk.
- The walls contain inscriptions that tell the story of the internment of Japanese Americans.
- A 15-foot tall bronze sculpture by Nina Akamu is set in the center of the plaza. It depicts two cranes partially trapped in barbed wire with joined wings rising into the air.
- A memorial bell, designed by sculptor Paul Matisse, is mounted on the wall near the Louisiana Avenue and D Street corner. The design relates to the large bells found in Japanese temples. The bell will have a device to prevent it from being rung repetitively, continuously or in rapid succession.
- A water pool is located between the circular plaza and the Louisiana Avenue sidewalk. Water flows over the edge on the path side of the pool. Several large boulders are located in the pool to symbolize the islands of Japan and the successive generations of Japanese Americans.
 - The walls around the plaza are intended to evoke a sense of confinement, commemorating the experience of internment. Relief is provided through lowering a portion of the center of the wall of the circular plaza drops to a height of 3'-6" to frame a view across the pool. This opening in the wall also allows views from the sidewalk to the plaza and sculpture.
- The natural grade of the site, with slight adjustments, will be used to form a berm around the walls and the memorial plaza.
- The memorial is encircled by Japanese cherry trees, with additional infill trees added at the corners of the site and along the streets.
- In cooperation with Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, the metro vent near the D Street sidewalk is shifted several feet.
- An underground mechanical vault accommodates water circulation equipment.
- Sewer lines and other utilities beneath the site are relocated to avoid future conflicts.
- Street parking around the site is reserved for holders of permits from the Architect of the Capitol and no change in parking is proposed.

PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTION

- At its meeting of January 9, 1997, the Commission approved the site for the National Japanese American Memorial. The Commission did not prescribe specific design guidelines but did urge that the design take advantage of the site's open space character and existing trees.

- On October 9, 1997 the Commission approved the design concept for the memorial and requested that, in the preparation of preliminary and final site and building plans, the National Park Service:
 - Provide additional information on the pool paving materials and any other pool elements that will be visible when the pool is dry during winter months.
 - Consider additional sound-producing fountain equipment toward the south end of the pool to mask traffic noise generated on Louisiana Avenue, if appropriate to the design.
 - Provide additional sections, sightlines, or other studies to illustrate how the landscaping and grading will affect the visible height of the back side of the walls.
 - Address the issue of site safety, due to the tall wall around part of the memorial.
 - Provide data on lighting of the memorial.

EVALUATION

The design of the National Japanese American Memorial provides an appropriate form for conveying the memorial's story and message. The design elements work together to create a straightforward and compelling whole, including the suggestion of the sense of containment and the symbolic reference to the Japanese islands. The bell will provide a memorable component of the memorial experience, while drawing on Japanese temple traditions.

Aspects of the concept design for which the Commission requested further clarification and/or study have been successfully addressed, specifically:

- Typically water in the pool will be three inches in depth. The surface of the pool is paved with “Academy Black” granite alternating between rough and smooth cut pavers that are arranged in concentric circles radiating from the center. This will result in a pleasing appearance in the winter months when there is no water in the pool.
- As water is circulated it will spill over the lip of the pool that is adjacent to the internal pathway (between the central plaza and the entrance on Louisiana Avenue closest to D Street). This will provide a low level of background noise that will be adequate to mask noise generated from traffic on the surrounding streets.
- The main walls of the memorial are 7’-3” high as measured from the plaza. Grading of the site results in the creation of a berm to minimize the height of the exterior of the wall, as viewed from both New Jersey Avenue and D Street. The wall tapers to less than 4 feet in height as the grade rises toward the corner of Louisiana Avenue and D Street. The granite wall helps identify the presence of the memorial on this square while appearing as an integral element of the landscape of the triangle. The berms are landscaped with groundcover and seasonal plantings.
- Site safety is not felt to be an issue in that there are only short lengths of the pathway that will be behind the full height of the walls. The wall on the pool side of the central plaza is reduced to 3’-6” in height.

- The intent is to light the memorial with a low level of ambient light. Lighting design for the memorial has yet to be prepared. When available, lighting design plans shall be submitted for review and approval.

COORDINATION

The Commission of Fine Arts

- The Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) approved the design concept for the National Japanese American Memorial at its meeting of September 18, 1997. CFA recommended that NPS study several further revisions to the design of the wall, to explore a profile other than sheer vertical; the siting of the bell, to better relate this element to the overall memorial design; and the landscaping, to make it subtle, simple, and elegant.
- On November 20, 1997 CFA approved design development plans for the memorial and asked NPS to restudy the design of the bell and the bevel of the walls.
- At its meeting on May 21, 1998 CFA approved the landscaping and the redesign of the bell and the walls.
- On July 15, 1999 CFA approved refinements to the design development plans and the final design of the bell. The Commission also requested that NPS consider simplification of the inscriptions and the sculpture.

Coordinating Committee

Preliminary and final site and building plans for the National Japanese American Memorial were reviewed by the Coordinating Committee on July 14, 1999. The Committee forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that the project has been coordinated with all agencies represented. Attending the meeting were representatives of NCPC, the District of Columbia Office of Planning, and the Department of Housing and Community Development, the National Park Service, General Services Administration, and Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

Conformance with the Comprehensive Plan

The location of the National Japanese American Memorial is consistent with the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital*.

- The memorial site is within the L'Enfant City and adjacent to Louisiana and New Jersey Avenues NW, which are designated Special Streets in the Preservation and Historic Features Element of the Comprehensive Plan. The proposal is consistent with an applicable policy contained in this element which specifies:

- Special Streets and Places should be maintained and enhanced in a manner that promotes their roles as major features that help establish the images and the symbols of the National Capital in the minds of its residents and visitors. They should be embellished, when possible, with monuments, fountains, sculpture, gardens, distinctive buildings, and other features of civic art....
- The proposal is also consistent with an applicable policy in the Federal Facilities Element that states:
 - New memorials to be located in the L’Enfant City and environs should be carefully sited to refine and complete the L’Enfant and McMillan Plans so far as possible.

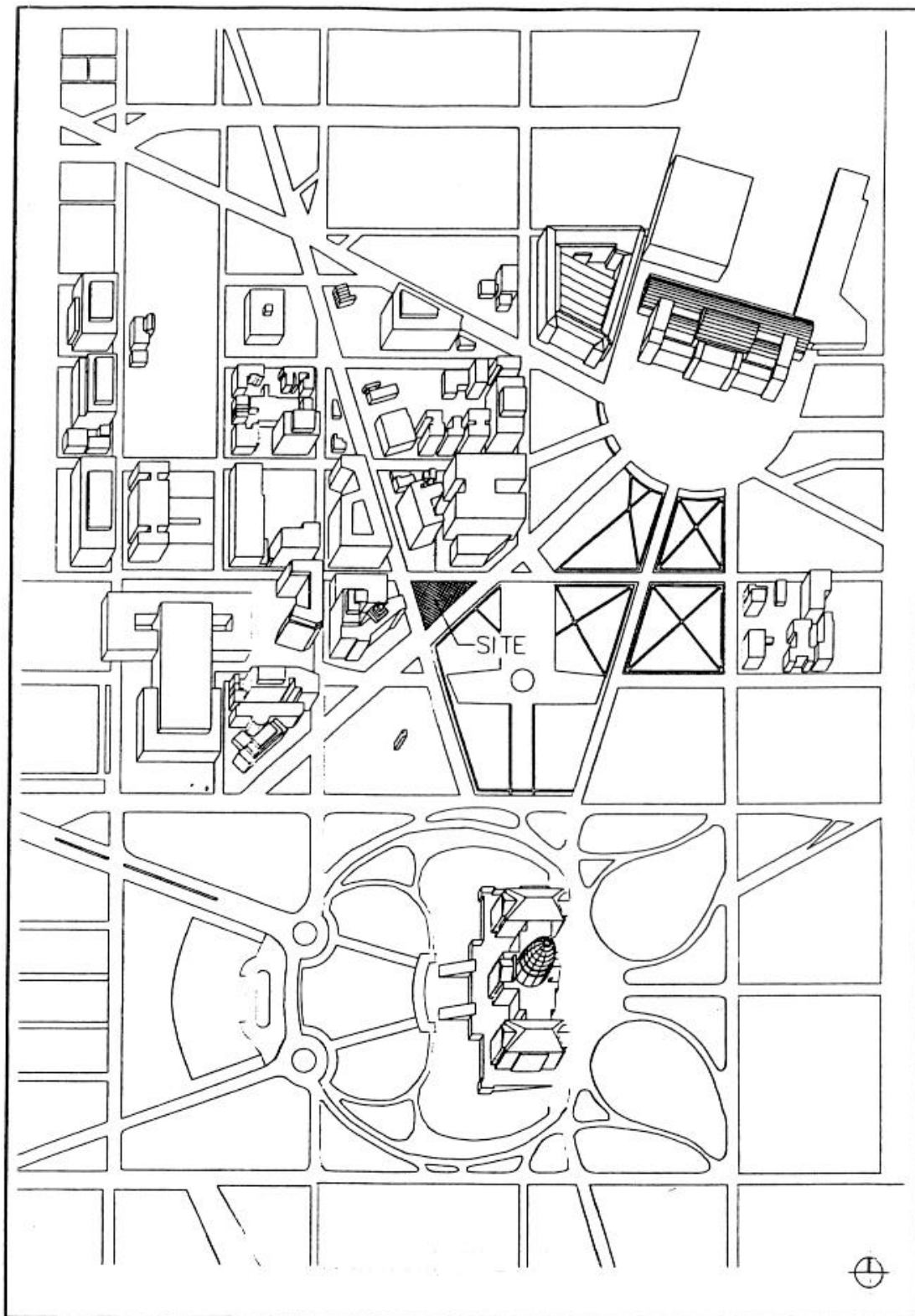
Historic Preservation

Pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, NPS has concluded its Section 106 responsibilities. NPS determined that the proposed memorial would have no adverse effect on the vistas down New Jersey and Louisiana Avenues, nor on the federal reservation. The District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Office concurred with this determination on December 8, 1997.

Environmental Impact

NPS has prepared an environmental assessment (EA) for the establishment and construction of the National Japanese American Memorial and has made a “Finding of No Significant Impact.”

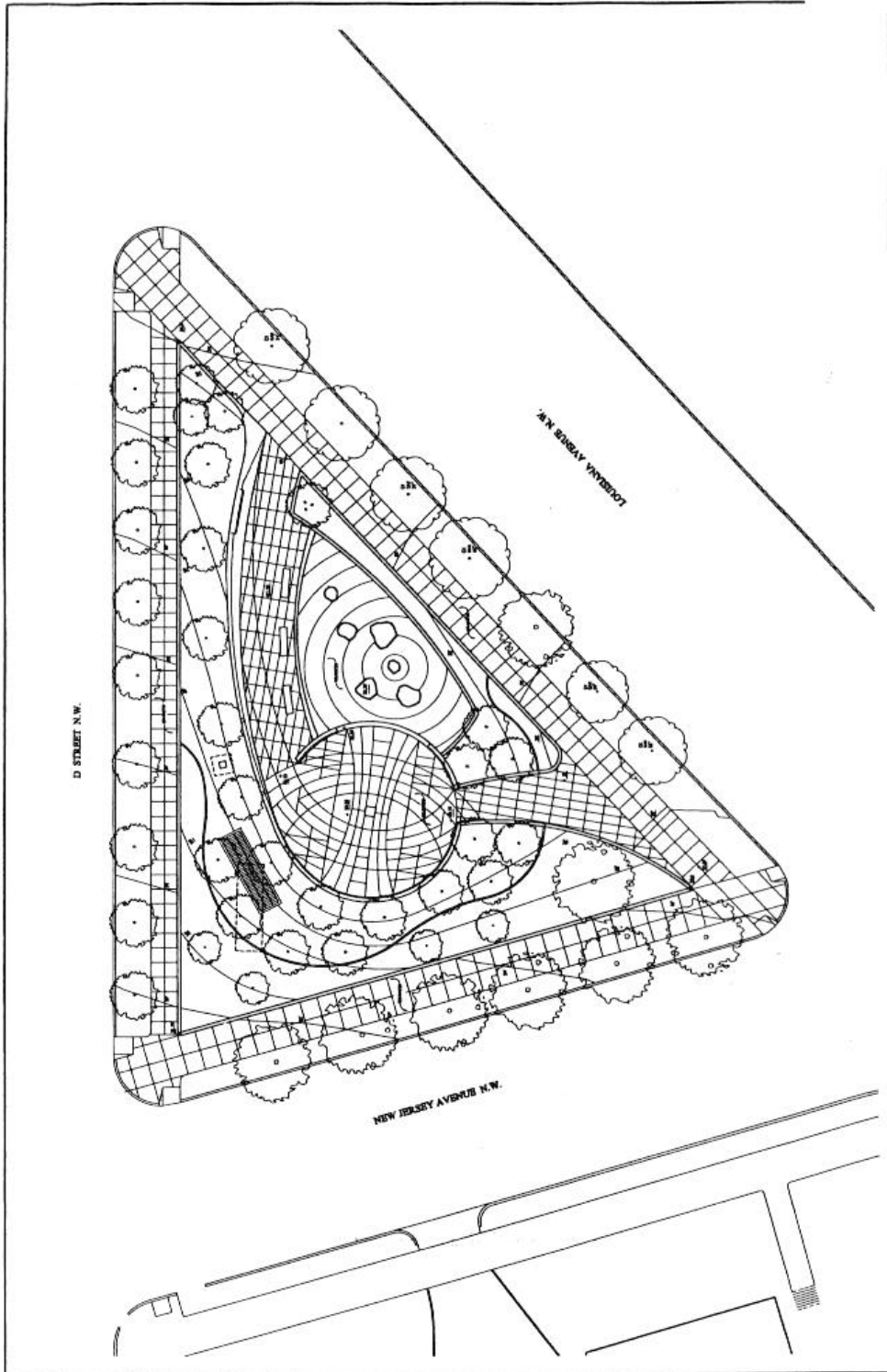
- The implementation of the project as described would not constitute a major federal action that would have significant impact on the quality of the human environment within the meaning of Section 102 (2c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. Accordingly, the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.
- Primary impacts to the natural environment are expected to be temporary and minor and are generally associated with construction activities.
 - Removal of 20 trees at the interior portion of the site will be required, but will be replaced by 28 trees.
 - At the perimeter of the site, nine existing street trees will be retained and 11 will be removed due to either poor health or noncompliance with the designated street trees. These will be replaced by 13 trees that are in compliance with the types of trees designated for each street.
 - Shrubs and ground covers to be removed will be replaced by approximately four times the quantity of similar shrubs and groundcovers, while approximately 3,000 square feet of grass area will be lost due to the incorporation of the memorial’s paved areas and the pool.
 - No floodplains or wetlands are located at the site.
- Visitation to the memorial is not expected to generate significant air or noise quality impacts since it is within walking distance of the Union Station Metrorail Station, is on the Tourmobile route, and is near other visitor attractions such as the Capitol.



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NATIONAL JAPANESE AMERICAN MEMORIAL
SITE VICINITY PLAN

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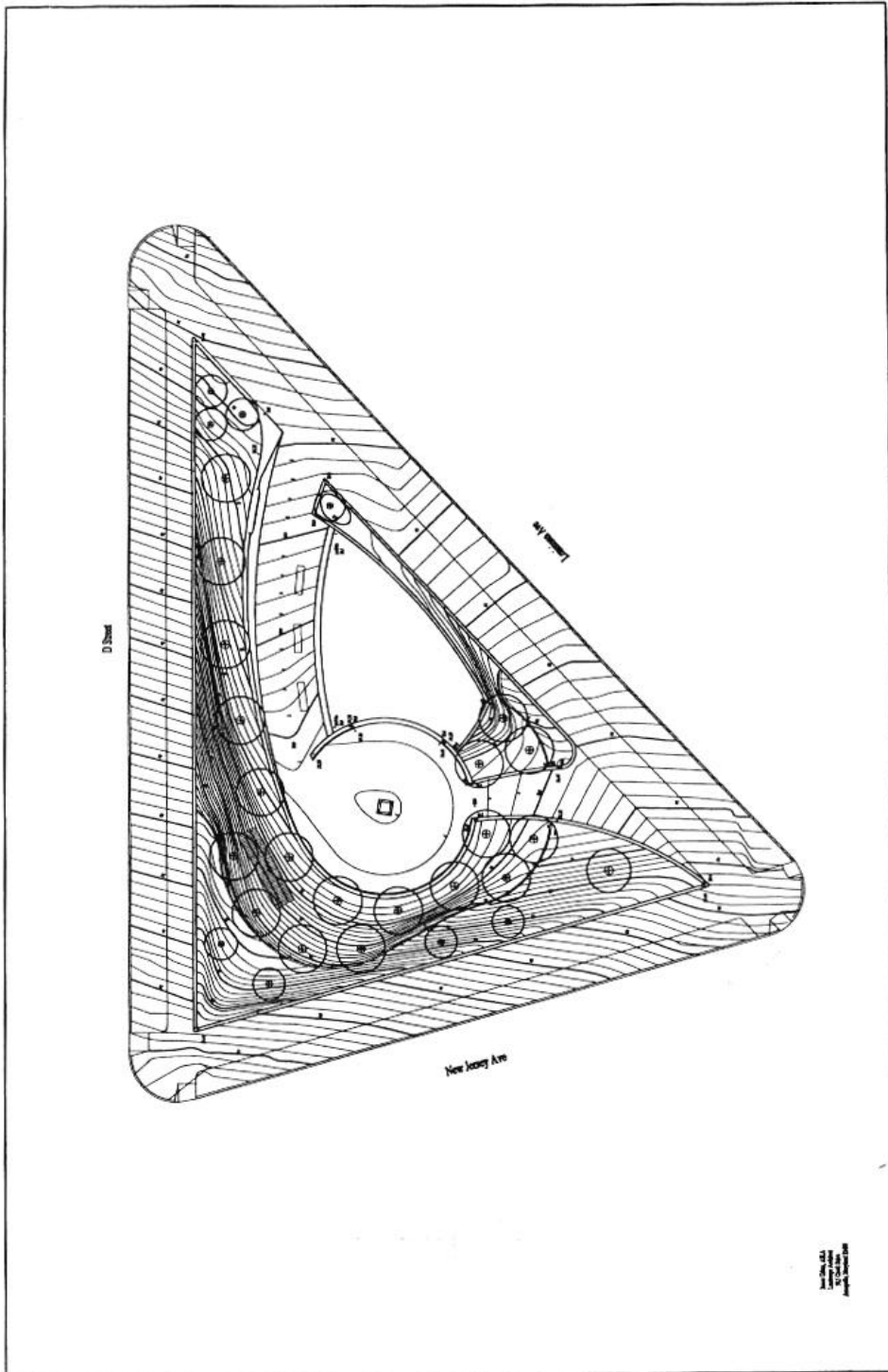
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SITE PLAN



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SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"



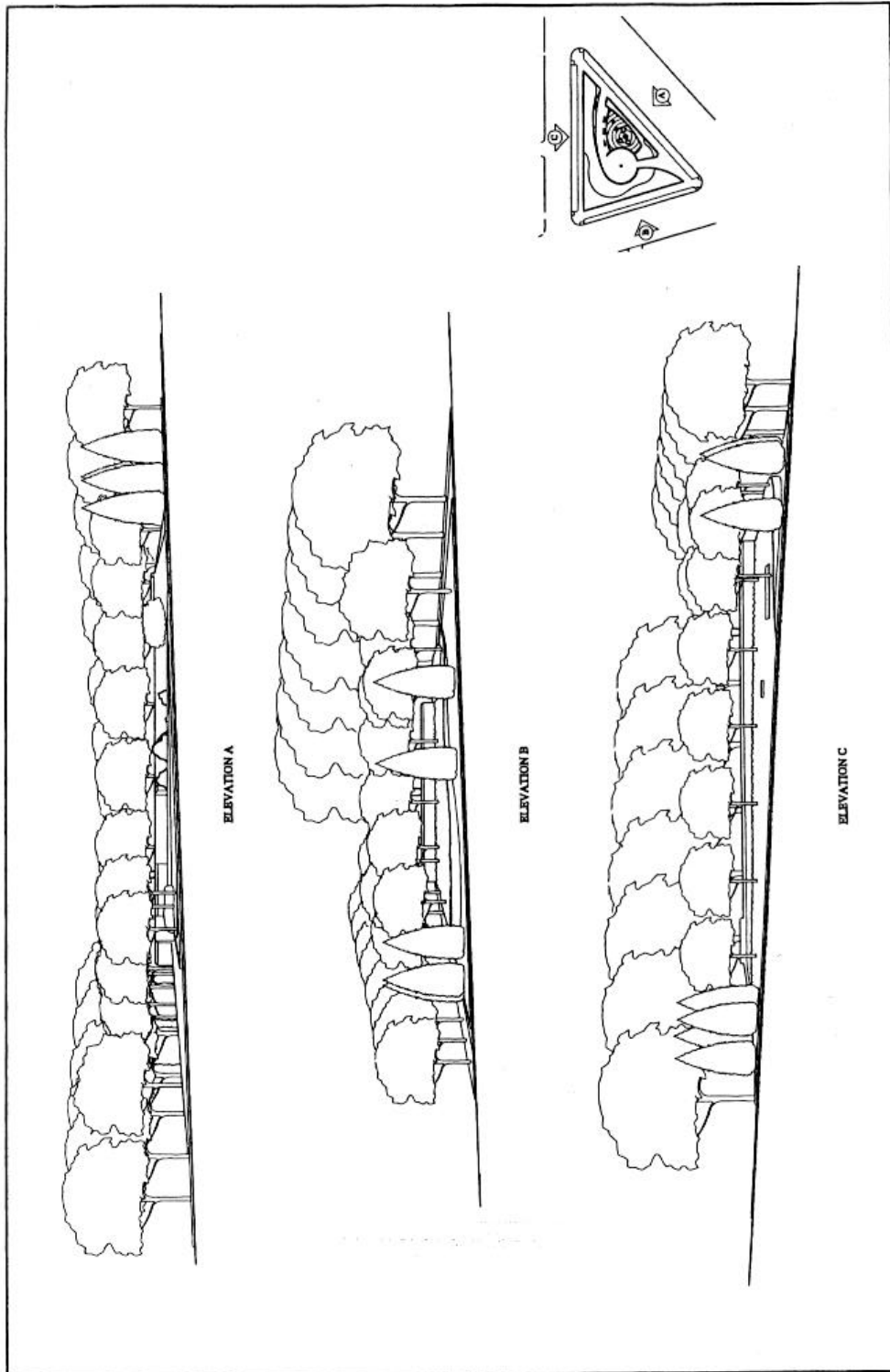
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NATIONAL JAPANESE AMERICAN MEMORIAL
GRADING PLAN



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SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"

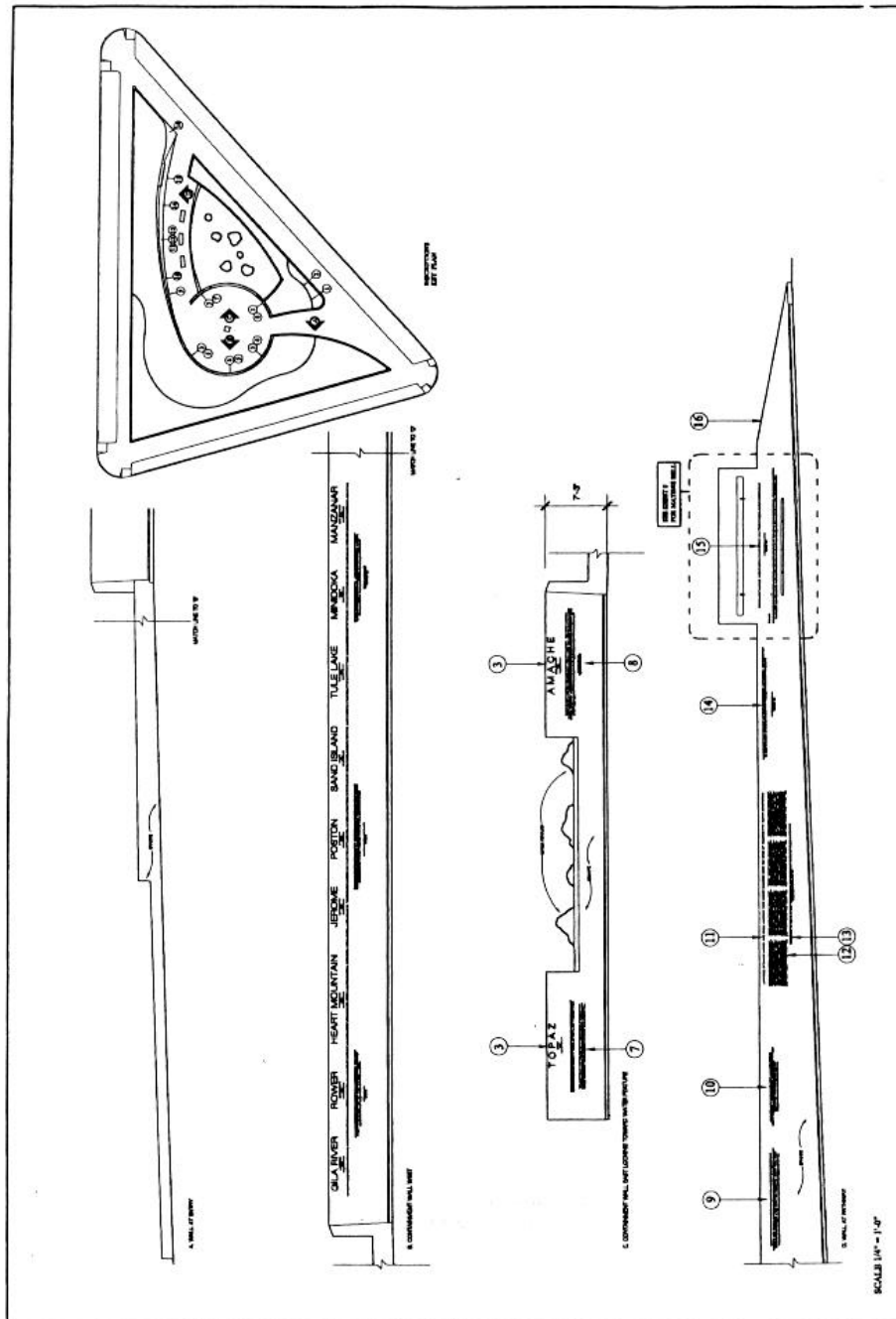


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ELEVATIONS

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